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ABSTRACT

This report describes the success of SWAS (School Within a School), an early dropout intervention program designed for average to above-average at-risk middle school students selected by the assistant principal. SWAS is a temporary self-contained institution within Davisville Middle School, North Kingstown, Rhode Island. As a prerequisite to student admission, SWAS teachers explain and get parents to "buy into" the program by signing contracts guaranteeing their involvement. Parents are required to come to one-a-month meetings with their child's SWAS teacher. Individual and group instruction are held in self-contained classrooms. As soon as the student demonstrates achievement and is recommended by the SWAS teacher, the guidance counselor, and the regular school receiving teacher, the student reenters the regular Davisville Middle School program. Students who do not meet reentry expectations must continue in the SWAS program. Of the former SWAS students who reentered the regular Davisville Middle School program, 84 percent improved their grades. In addition, Davisville's teachers felt that 100 percent improved their classwork, and that 95 pecent improved their attitude toward school. Parents responded quite favorably and found SWAS helpful to their sons and daughters. The appendixes include listings of criteria for entering and exiting the program. (JAM)

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SWAS

SCHOOL WITHIN A SCHOOL

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A MIDDLE LEVEL DROPOUT INTERVENTION PROGRAM

at

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Tele: 401-884-8330

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November 1988

WHAT IS SWAS (SCHOOL WITHIN A SCHOOL)?

SWAS is an early intervention program designed for that small group of average to above average middle school students, who, for a variety of reasons, are not meeting success. This program is not a special education program, but one designed for the student who "falls between the cracks". Often these middle school students are apathetic towards school, acting out and disruptive in class, and failing academically.

Since these students, grades 6 to 8, ages 12 to 15, fit the profile of a potential dropout, the immediate goal is to reintegrate or mainstream them successfully into their regular class program with a change in performance as well as attitude and self-esteem.

HOW DID SWAS DEVELOP AND WHY?

The program outline evolved from a faculty meeting in April, 1987, where the Superintendent along with the Director of Pupil Services was invited to hear the concerns of the teaching staff at Davisville Middle School. At that point, there was, for a variety of reasons, a possibility of fifty-seven retentions in grades 6-7-8. From this meeting a profile of an at-risk or potential dropout student was developed. Of particular concern by the staff was that, although this type of at-risk student is often identified by grade 6, teachers watch helplessly as the student continues to fail in both academic and in social development, despite numerous and varied intervention techniques.

Davisville Middle School embraces the teaming structure. The Davisville staff has a commitment to academic excellence, as well as preparing the transescents to function successfully in all areas of their education.

Despite the faculty's concerted effort, there still was a segment of the student population that was not meeting success. As a result of this, the SWAS Program was developed.

HOW DOES THE SWAS PROGRAM WORK?

SWAS is a temporary self-contained placement for the selected at-risk students. The program is staffed by a veteran teacher from the school faculty with a full time aide. The assistant principal serves as the program administrator and is also actively involved with the participating students and their parents.

A list of potential SWAS students is compiled by the administrator. This list is generated by team teachers, guidance and administrative staff. Each student is rated on a weighted scale (Appendix A). The SWAS Advisory

Board consisting of teachers, school psychologists and guidance counselors, with the assistant principal as the chairperson, recommends potential students for participation in SWAS.

After receiving the list, the SWAS teacher makes the home contact and sets up a parent conference to view the program and answer any questions. The parents must totally "buy into" the program, because parent involvement is crucial. A contract is then explained and signed. (Appendix B)

With all signatures in place the student is removed from all classes and placed in the self-contained SWAS room.

The SWAS teacher meets weekly with each students' sending team so that the curriculum is delivered parallelly. This type of curriculum delivery insures that the student is working at the same pace as his/her mainstreamed classmates.

Where it is appropriate group lessons are taught. Students also work on their own with opportunity for individual instruction. If they choose to do nothing, they may sit for a day or so, but take the consequences for their actions when rewards such as extra shop, extra Physical Education, videos, guest speakers, etc. are available.

By previous arrangement the classroom teachers and SWAS teacher agree upon a plan to correct, grade, and record the work. This can be done on an individual teacher preference.

As the student begins to achieve, he/she is asked in which regular class they can be effective. The receiving teacher, SWAS teacher and student have a meeting to discuss re-entry expectations in that class only. When the student demonstrates success, he/she may enter another class following the same procedure. If the student does not meet with success, he/she comes back into the SWAS room with no administrative intervention, and may try again at a later date.

As a student is ready to be exited, the parents and student meet with the SWAS teacher, the assistant principal and the guidance counselor to discuss the exit criteria (Appendix C). The student is encouraged at this time to continue to feel welcome in the SWAS room and to use it as a resource. As a vacancy exists, the SWAS Advisory Board reconvenes to fill the slot.

HOW SUCCESSFUL IS SWAS?

According to the Rhode Island Department of Education Program Evaluation:

Academically 84% of the SWAS students improved their grades during the year in one or more courses. By June, 1988, 10 eighth grade students successfully exited the SWAS program, and were fully mainstreamed back into the regular team structure.

From a behavioral and attitudinal perspective, teachers rated 100% of the students as having improved in classwork, and 95% as having improved in their attitude toward school. Likewise, students had a clearer perception of their improvement from pre-to-post SWAS based on their self-rating.

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Parent reactions to SWAS were very favorable. The parents found the monthly meeting very helpful, were pleased to have weekly reports of their child's progress, and were generally positive about their contact with the school. The majority of parents recognized the importance of their involvement in the program. They viewed the regular communication with the school as a valuable component of the program.

All parents were in agreement that the program had been helpful to their son/daughter and had positively influenced their child's attitude and resulting behavior. They noted particular improvement in grades, confidence, stress levels, acceptance of "no for an answer" and improved behavior at home.

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APPENDIX A

Criteria for Selecting Students

	Weighted Scale	CHARACTERISTICS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL "HIGH RISK" STUDENT	Source of Data	Points
1.	1-10	Retained once at the elementary level	academic records	_____
2.	1-5	Does not respect authority	school staff	_____
3.	1-5	Low self-esteem	guidance counselor	_____
4.	1-10	Acting-out behavior	referrals to office	_____
5.	1-10	Frequently "in trouble" in school or in community	guidance counselor	_____
6.	1-5	Little or no family structure nor family commitment to school's goals	guidance counselor	_____
7.	1-10	Consistently disrupts learning environment	teachers (team decision)	_____
8.	1-5	Apathetic toward school	teachers (team decision)	_____
9.	1-5	No positive peer role models-- is often himself a "negative" peer role model	guidance counselor	_____
10.	1-5	Gaps in skill achievement	academic records	_____
11.	1-5	Average to above average IQ or ability level	academic records	_____
11-75 points		10 points added for students identified as LEP		_____
		10 points added for students identified as minority		_____
			TOTAL POINTS	_____

Process: Students exhibiting these characteristics will be assigned weighted points by the appropriate data source.

5-8 students from each grade will be targeted. (Grades 6, 7, 8) 15 students maximum.

Students on a waiting list will be serviced after primary participants exit the program.

APPENDIX B

DAVISVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL
200 School Street
North Kingstown, R.I. 02852
884-8330/294-4581-ext. 261

School Within A School

September 13, 1988

To the Parents of

A School Within A School (SWAS) program has been developed to help middle school students meet success with a different structure of curriculum delivery and a more effective format for development of social interaction skills.

Your child has been identified as a candidate for participation in this program.

This will be a self contained program. The teacher will meet regularly with team teachers, so that the student will academically keep up with his school work. Emphasis will be given to establishing better work habits, study skills and a more effective use of time.

Parents are expected to meet with the SWAS teacher to develop learning partnership strategies between parent and student. Contact with the parent will be at least once a month.

The minimum stay in SWAS will be nine weeks in order to give the student the impact of a consistent program. They will be mainstreamed back into the school structure in the areas in which they are most likely to meet success. The goal is to fully integrate this student into his original team with better skills, more motivation and a more realistic social attitude.

Although the time in the program will vary, no student will remain later than the fourth quarter of grade eight.

I give my permission for (name of student) _____ to enter the School Within A School (SWAS) program at Davisville Middle School and agree to participate in prearranged meetings to help my child meet success.

Signature of parent/guardian _____

Signature of teacher _____

Date _____

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APPENDIX C

SWAS Exit Criteria

1. In order for a student to be mainstreamed in one regular academic program, the student must be able to do all of the following 80% of the time:

    a. be prepared daily with homework, texts, and all necessary tools
    b. will not disturb members of the class
    c. will not disturb the teaching process
    d. will follow established rules
    e. will be able to identify a problem when it occurs and will be able to take appropriate steps to correct the problem

2. A student will be in SWAS a minimum of 4 weeks before being mainstreamed in order to consistently demonstrate an academic turnaround; or sooner if mutually agreed to by a receiving teacher.

3. When a student is ready to exit the program, the SWAS teacher, parent, student and receiving team teachers will meet and review the established plans as to what the student is expected to do in the mainstreamed status.

4. The student must demonstrate an observable improvement in attitude and behavior as evidenced by the successful integration into team classes.

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School Within A School

(SWAS)

Parent Questionnaire

1. Is a program such as SWAS needed? _____

2. Did the design of the program meet your child's needs? _____

3. Did the program help your child's self esteem? _____

4. Did the program help your child's attitude? _____

5. Did this program help your child's academic progress? _____

6. What changes would you make? _____

7. Do you have any comments or suggestions to help SWAS be even more effective?

Signature _____ Date _____

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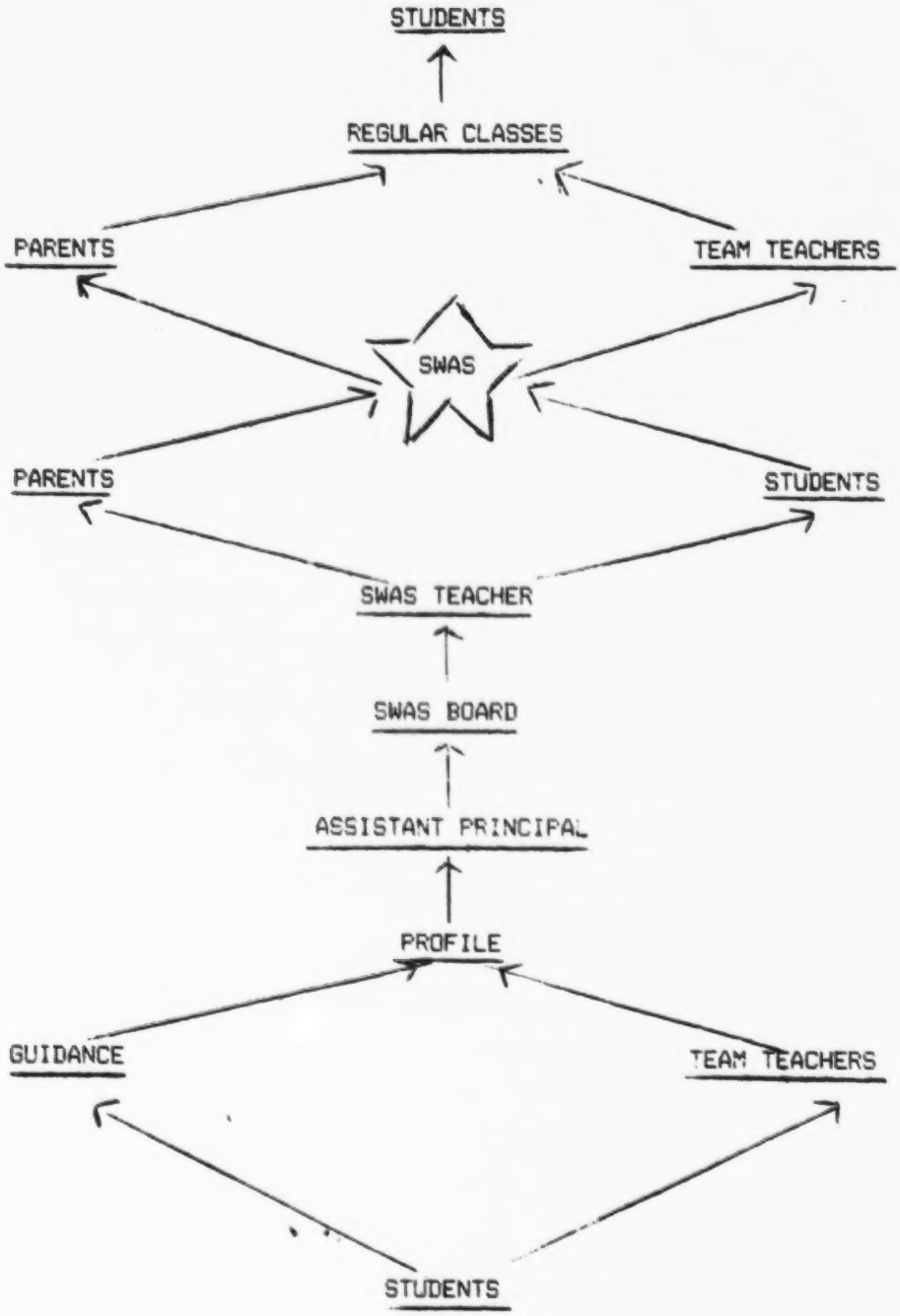

by S. Kresinski

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